

8/19/03

## **The Cambridge Public Library, the USA Patriot Act, and You**

Please be advised that the Cambridge Public Library makes every effort to protect your privacy. Under the federal USA PATRIOT ACT of 2001 (Public Law 107-56), records of the books and other materials you borrow from this library as well as information about your use of the library's computers may be obtained by federal agents. The law also prohibits library workers from informing you if federal agents have obtained records about you.

Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 78, Section 7, states, "That part of the records of a public library which reveals the identity and intellectual pursuits of a person using such library shall not be a public record...."

Up until the passage of the USA Patriot Act (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act) in 2001, the Cambridge Public Library would not release information about a library patron without a court order or subpoena. It would have been permissible for the library to notify you of the request for your records and you would have had an opportunity to go to court and challenge the order.

Since the enactment of the Patriot Act, the library is subject to search warrants requesting information about library users and their intellectual pursuits. Such search warrants are effective immediately and the library is forbidden by statute to inform you or anyone else, except our legal counsel, about the warrant. Access to patron information may include: database search records, circulation records, computer use records, inter-library loan records, and reference interviews.

As a matter of principle and in practice, the Cambridge Public Library strives to retain as little information as possible about library patrons and the nature of their use of the library. To protect you, we take the following precautions:

- All records connecting borrowers with materials are deleted once the items are checked in, assuming there are no outstanding fines on the item(s)
- We encourage library users to clear the memory of the public access computers by rebooting the computer at the end of each session (ask for help if you don't know how to do this)
- We delete the histories from each public access computer at the end of every day
- All computer sign in sheets and logs are tabulated for statistical purposes each day and then are shredded
- We do not keep a log of reference queries

Now, as in the past, any instances of illegal activity on library premises, such as theft, vandalism, disturbing the peace, etc. will be reported to law enforcement authorities immediately.

Please be assured that the Trustees and staff of the Cambridge Public Library will do their utmost, as we have in the past under state statute, to uphold your privacy and confidentiality insofar as it relates to your intellectual pursuits and library use.

To access the full text of the USA Patriot Act log on to:<http://thomas.loc.gov>, select legislation: public laws

Questions and/or comments about the USA Patriot Act and its effect on you, can be submitted to:

Attorney General John Ashcroft  
Department of Justice  
Washington, D.C. 20530  
202-353-1555  
[AskDOJ@usgdoj.gov](mailto:AskDOJ@usgdoj.gov)